

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, March 04, 2020

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Winder, Den Hartog, Crabtree, Woodward, Lent, Buckner-Webb, and Ward-Engelking

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: None

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Mortimer** called the Senate Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:01 p.m.

H 512 **Blake Youde**, Idaho Charter School Network, presented **H 512** and told the Committee that charter schools are required to accept students on a random basis with first preference given to certain groups of students. He went on that some charter schools are developing to serve students with specific goals or needs, and that some charter schools end up diverging from their intended purpose because they have many students that do not fit the mission of the school. **Mr. Youde** told the Committee that the bill allows charter schools to create a weighted student lottery to give preference to students who would fit the mission a greater chance of being enrolled. He stated that the bill only allows the weighted student groups to be students who are English language learners, economically disadvantaged, disabled, homeless or in foster care, or at risk.

TESTIMONY: **Brad Peterson**, Co-Founder of Future Republic School, testified in support of **H 512** and told the Committee that the school supports the bill because it is non-compulsory and would allow the school to better meet their charter agreement.

Heather Dennis, Organization Director of Answers Charter School, spoke in support of **H 512** and told the Committee that there are higher levels of success in students who attend economically diverse schools than those who attend economically homogenous schools.

Keith Donahue, Executive Director of Sage International School and Forge International School, spoke in support of **H 512**. He told the Committee that the school's economically disadvantaged students test for literacy at their grade level at a higher rate than the average students in the rest of the state.

Terry Ryan, Board Chair of Idaho Charter School Network (Network), spoke in favor of the bill and told the Committee about the expected benefits of the bill (see Attachment 1).

DISCUSSION: **Senator Den Hartog** asked if charter schools would have to return to their authorizers and amend their charter petition to allow a weighted lottery system. **Mr. Youde** responded that they would.

MOTION: **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **H 512** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Lent** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

DISCUSSION: **Vice Chairman Thayn** told the Committee that there were issues about content standards brought up in the administrative rules process and that he and Chairman Mortimer had drafted a letter the State Department of Education (Department). He went on that the purpose of the letter was to state the House and Senate Education Committees' concerns with current content standards, state the goals for new standards, provide direction for the State Department, remove uncertainty for educators regarding the goals of the Legislature, begin the discussion of the process for new content standards, and give direction to the interim committee.

Chairman Mortimer told the Committee that the letter has been reviewed by some members of both the House and Senate Education Committees. He said that the letter is not seeking to replace the interim committee, but to guide the interim committee. He continued that the intent of the letter is to show unity between the House and Senate Education Committees and to provide guidance for the interim committee, the Department, and the State Board of Education (Board).

Senator Winder voiced his support for the intent of the letter and thanked Chairman Mortimer and Vice Chairman Thayn for their work on the letter.

Senator Ward-Engelking voiced concern that the letter is too prescriptive. **Chairman Mortimer** responded that the letter is meant to give a general framework rather than restrictions. **Senator Buckner-Webb** told the Committee that being collaborative, straight-forward, and non-prescriptive to the Board and Department is essential. **Chairman Mortimer** responded that the letter seeks to advance the collaboration between the Legislature, the Board, and the Department.

Senator Woodward discussed the possibility of revisiting and revising current content standards rather than entirely replacing them. **Senator Den Hartog** concurred with the need to find common ground with the House Education Committee. She went on that the letter requests a more extensive process than some other interim committees. **Vice Chairman Thayn** responded that there were some differences between the letter and the concurrent resolution, but not so much difference that it would be appropriate to halt the process of either.

Senator Lent told the Committee that the letter creates a good starting point for the interim committee on content standards. **Senator Ward-Engelking** voiced her support for finding a path forward regarding content standards. She went on that the process of revisiting content standards would be very expensive.

MOTION: **Senator Winder** moved to authorize Chairman Mortimer and Vice Chairman Thayn to sign the letter. **Senator Den Hartog** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 3:49 p.m.

Senator Dean M. Mortimer
Chair

Morgan Howard
Secretary